

VZCZCXRO6639
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH
DE RUEHKL #0448/01 1510802
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 300802Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1072
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000448

SIPDIS

FOR EAP/MTS AMD G/TIP -- SALLY NEUMANN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/30/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KWMN](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND NEW WOMEN'S MINISTER ENGAGE ON
TRAFFICKING

Classified By: POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF MARK D. CLARK, reasons 1.4 (b and d).

Summary

1. (SBU) Ambassador Keith met on May 28 with Dr. Ng Yen Yen, Minister for Women, Family, and Community Development, and discussed the Ministry's operations of two trafficking victims' shelters, migrant workers, illegal immigrants, and developing programs for women and children. Minister Ng invited the Ambassador to visit the TIP victims' shelters and welcomed the Ambassador's offer to maintain close communication between the Ministry and the Embassy on trafficking and other issues. She welcomed the prospect of a trip to Malaysia by Ambassador Lagon and indicated she wished to be personally involved in ensuring the success of such a trip. She asked for information regarding immigration statistics, youth leadership programs, such as Americorp, programs for women to increase the business competitiveness, and other best practices. Dr. Ng conveyed a clear sense that she wished to enhance our cooperation to advance shared objectives regarding trafficking in persons, and more generally good governance and engaging civil society. End Summary.

Talking TIP

2. (C) On May 28, Ambassador Keith paid a courtesy call on Dr. Ng Yen Yen, the new Minister for Women, Families, and Community Development (Women's Ministry). (Note: Ng's predecessor, Shahrizat, had declined to meet with the Embassy following the release of the June 2007 U.S. trafficking in persons report. End Note.) Minister Ng engaged Ambassador Keith in a cordial and friendly manner. Minister Ng discussed Malaysia's efforts to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) with a focus on the role played by the Women's Ministry. She stated the Ministry had sheltered 39 suspected victims of trafficking since Malaysia's anti-TIP law came into full force on February 29. Ministry protection officers verified four of the women as trafficking victims. Minister Ng asked about the factors involved in U.S. tier rankings and said she hoped to receive from Washington a clear sense of what practical steps were associated with improving a country's ranking. (Note: Post has provided such information to GOM officials over the past years, and will use the upcoming release of the TIP report to brief the Women's Ministry. End Note.) She said Malaysia does not believe in lobbying for a particular tier placement.

3. (SBU) Dr. Ng expressed her Ministry's willingness to work closely with the Embassy to improve efforts to combat TIP. Minister Ng clarified the Ministry's view on trafficking victims, stating her Ministry was ready to help victims of trafficking as much as possible, but that identifying victims was difficult. She highlighted some of the problems, especially security, involved in operating the TIP victims'

shelters, noting that "boyfriends" often tried to get sheltered women to leave the compound. She wants a stronger police presence at the shelters, noting Women's Ministry protection officers are social workers and not law enforcement officers. Minister Ng invited the Ambassador to tour the TIP victim shelters, but in a low profile manner. The Minister also welcomed a future visit by G/TIP Ambassador Lagon, offering to meet with him personally and set-up a relevant roundtable discussion.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador Keith reinforced the USG's commitment to engage constructively with the Government of Malaysia (GOM) to combat TIP. He noted the recent efforts made by the Embassy on sharing best practices and experts on TIP. He made clear that a steady engagement with the Embassy could facilitate our efforts to obtain subject matter experts and best practices that match the expressed needs of the GOM. He also noted that we share similar issues with Malaysia, including identifying illegal versus legal immigrants, and determining who might be TIP victims.

Migrant Workers and Illegal Immigrants

¶5. (SBU) Minister Ng asked about services the U.S. provides for illegal immigrants, especially children. She noted that illegal immigrants in Malaysia represented a strain on resources and there is much debate on which services, including education, must be provided and which should be denied. She was surprised to learn the U.S., unlike Malaysia, does not have a national identity card.

KUALA LUMP 00000448 002 OF 002

Women and Children Issues

¶6. (SBU) Minister Ng appeared very interested in programs that encourage women to compete within the business world. She had tasked her Ministry with developing programs that train women, especially single mothers, to operate small businesses. She also wished to look into youth development programs for children 18-years-old and younger, especially programs promoting good health and leadership. She intended to expand sex education under the guise of "self-protection and self-preservation." (Note: Sex education is a controversial issue. Conservative groups in Malaysia claim sex education promotes pre-marital sex and "erodes values." End note.) Minister Ng is very interested in how the United States deals with juvenile delinquents sentenced to prison terms. Specifically, she asked how the U.S. tracks youths after their release from jail to verify they are reformed. She also asked about U.S. practices in caring for abandoned babies, noting that the incidence of babies abandoned in Malaysia was probably much higher than in the United States.

¶7. (U) Ambassador Keith highlighted Americorp as a successful program that develops leadership in young Americans, and promised the Embassy would share other information responsive to the Minister's questions.

Comment

¶8. (SBU) Minister Ng's readiness to meet the Ambassador, her willingness to discuss TIP, her statements regarding future cooperation, and her friendly demeanor represent an opening for engagement with a key ministry responsible for protecting trafficking victims, an opening we did not have over the past year. We intend to take the Minister up on her statements on working closely with the Embassy, particularly on trafficking.

KEITH